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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 2.45 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Westerwelle	(Germany)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mammadyarov
	China	Mr. Yang Jiechi
	Colombia	Ms. Holguín Cuéllar
	France	Mr. Fabius
	Guatemala	Mr. Caballeros
	India	Mr. Mathai
	Morocco	Mr. El Othmani
	Pakistan	Mr. Jilani
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	South Africa	Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane
	Togo	Mr. Ohin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hague
	United States of America	Mrs. Rodham Clinton

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

High-level meeting of the Security Council on peace and security in the Middle East

Letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2012/686)

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Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 2.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

High-level meeting of the Security Council on peace and security in the Middle East

Letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2012/686)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, ministers and other representatives here in the Chamber. Their presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter to be addressed.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/686, which contains a letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Since Germany began its current term in the Security Council, in January 2011, we have witnessed a dramatic change across the Near and Middle East. The people in the region have expressed their hopes for dignity, democracy, economic and social participation, prosperity and respect of their fundamental human rights. At the beginning, we spoke of the Arab Spring. We have learned that it would be better to speak of Arab seasons.

The movement for change in the Arab world has not followed the same pattern in every country. Indeed, more than ever, the situation differs from one country to another, but the process of change continues.

We are all concerned about the recent turmoil in many Arab countries in response to a shameful anti-Islam video. Let me be very clear.

I can understand very well that believers feel deeply offended by that horrible and shameful video, but the response to such provocations cannot be violence. There is no justification for violence and murder.

What we are witnessing now is not a confrontation of religions, nor is it a clash of cultures. What we are witnessing is a clash within societies. It is a struggle of the open-minded with the closed-minded. It is a struggle of the reasonable with the fundamentalists. It is a clash of the peaceful with the violent. This week has to serve to strengthen those in all societies all over the world who stand up for respect and tolerance, for those who know that freedom and responsibility are but two sides of the same coin. There is no doubt about where Germany stands. Now more than ever, we are with those who work for peace. We see the challenges, but we believe in the historic opportunities that the change in the Arab world is opening up. Germany's offer of a transformation partnership to provide education, jobs and growth continues to stand.

The League of Arab States has assumed a leading role with regard to regional peace and security. It has taken a clear stance on the conflicts in Syria and Libya. For the Syrian people, however, the prospect for peace still seems a distant dream. As the international community, we must be united to stop the violence and help initiate a process of political transition. We must find a common response. We owe it to the people. We appreciate the active leadership of the Arab League to halt the killing in Syria.

The change in the Arab world has made peace in the Middle East more urgent than ever. Negotiations are the way to achieve a two-State solution that satisfies the legitimate demands on both sides — the Israelis and the Palestinians. We must therefore ensure that the peace process remains a priority on the international agenda. By endorsing the Saudi Peace Initiative the League of Arab States has made a constructive offer that is of critical importance.

We believe that it is necessary to solidify and develop the cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League. The commitment of the Arab League to the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter is the basis for more cooperation. Above all, more focus is needed on what we can achieve together in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution. We need practical progress. For instance, we could think about more frequent briefings and consultations with

representatives of the League of Arab States. I would also welcome the establishment of a United Nations office in Cairo to improve cooperation with the secretariat of the Arab League.

The time has come. As the Arab world undergoes historical change, let us seize the opportunity to open a new chapter of cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: We meet at a time of historic and often inspirational change in the Middle East and North Africa. Several momentous transitions in the Arab World are under way, moving ahead with difficulty but in the clear direction of the freedoms that had been denied for so long.Yet, as old orders crumble and new ones struggle to emerge, this is also a time of widespread apprehension and tragic violence.

The peace process between Israelis and Palestinians remains stalemated, as the window for a two-State solution narrows dangerously. The League of Arab States Arab Peace Initiative remains an important part of the framework aimed at ending the occupation and achieving a long overdue agreement. I count on the continued generosity of the League's members in providing financial support for the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East at this time of need. I urge members and other members of the international community to do more in both regards.

In Syria the conflict has become a threat to regional and international peace and security. A human tragedy is unfolding in full view, but also in the darkness of prisons, under the rubble of entire neighbourhoods and in the traumatized minds of children. I appeal to all with influence to persuade the parties that there is no military solution to this crisis.

Tensions in the region are also inflamed over nuclear issues. Members of the Council should do their part to discourage any escalation and to insist on peaceful solutions that respect the United Nations Charter and international law.

There has also been unrest linked to an act of hatred towards one religion that has caused both understandable offence and unacceptable violence.

Against that complex backdrop, I welcome this high-level discussion on the partnership between the League and the Council.

Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter provides vast opportunities for regional organizations. The Security Council long ago recognized the vital role they can play in consolidating peace agreements and enhancing peace and stability.

With a new political era at hand in the Arab world, the Arab League has acquired a new sense of purpose. The League was among the first organizations to publicly acknowledge that the Tunisian revolution was rooted in economic and social disparities and the aspiration for greater freedom and justice. The League was also among the first organizations to condemn the atrocities committed by the former Libyan regime and to urge the international community to take action.

Both the United Nations and the League worked to help ensure the transparency of landmark elections in Tunisia and Libya. Our joint role has been most prominent in Syria. Members of the Arab League made significant contributions to the United Nations military observer Mission. Of course, we together appointed, first, Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan and, subsequently, Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, as our emissaries in the search for a political solution. Those mediation efforts need solid and concrete support from the Council.

Looking ahead, I see four areas that merit special attention.

First, let us improve the exchange of information. Dialogue between our secretariats should be focused and frequent. Another avenue for enhanced contacts may prove to be the placement of the Office of the Joint Special Representative for Syria and his deputy in Cairo — a possibility that is being explored.

Secondly, we should put conflict prevention at the centre of our agenda. The United Nations continues to strengthen its ability to act early while helping regional organizations build capacity for facilitation, mediation and dialogue.

Thirdly, let us explore new areas for collaboration. The Middle East holds vast potential for the development of sustainable energy; let us explore what more we can do in the context of my Sustainable Energy for All initiative. Our relationship need not be limited to political action on the immediate crises of the day.

Fourthly, let us ensure the success of the transitions that have been set in motion. We must continue to be ready to provide concrete assistance, if and when requested. Outsiders can share their experience and encourage progress — humbly, patiently and respectfully — but the major work has to be done by, and in each, society.

At this tumultuous time for the Arab region, people are looking to our organizations to be on their side in the fight for justice, dignity and opportunity.

The League of Arab States is a trusted partner of the United Nations. I look forward to working even more closely with the League to realize the aspirations of people across the arc of the United Nations membership.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elarabv, Secretary General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Elaraby (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to my dear friend Guido Westerwelle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany and current President of the Security Council, for his initiative in holding this high-level meeting of the Security Council to debate the situation in the Middle East and the means to strengthen relations of cooperation and joint action between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. Such an initiative embodies an important principle set out in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, which encourages regional organizations to tackle issues in their regions by turning to the Security Council to find peaceful solutions to conflict and to maintain international peace and security.

On many occasions the Security Council has moved in that direction. It has adopted resolutions supporting such cooperation, most notably resolution 1631 (2005), whose paragraph 7 refers to regular meetings between the Security Council and regional organizations in order to promote cooperation in maintaining international peace and security. In that context I must stress that transparency, clarity and frankness are the bases required for any cooperation between the Security Council and such parties, so allow me to speak transparently and to be clear and frank about the crucial need for a dialogue between the League of Arab States and the Security Council.

The League of Arab States, which was established before the United Nations, believes that a fundamental pillar for international peace and security is the effectiveness and credibility of the Security Council, as well as the full, faithful and precise implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly those of the Council. The League believes that non-implementation of those resolutions is one of the fundamental reasons for tension and instability, both regionally and internationally.

The involvement of the Security Council in Arab issues is very old, going back to the birth of the United Nations itself. Resolutions have been adopted for more than six decades on Palestine, which is the fundamental, central issue for the Arab world and has been the fundamental cause of tension and instability in the region for many decades, persisting as one of the oldest unresolved issues in the international arena. The League has always stressed that a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, will only be achieved through a complete and faithful implementation of Security Council resolutions.

Those resolutions have addressed all aspects of the conflict. The Council has adopted many resolutions on ending Israeli occupation of occupied Arab lands, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); resolutions on the legitimacy of building settlements on Palestinian land, the most important being perhaps resolution 446 (1979) and resolution 252 (1968) on the non-recognition of unilateral measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in Al-Quds Al-Sharif; resolutions on the occupied Syrian Arab Golan; and resolutions relating to ending Israeli occupation of the remaining occupied land in southern Lebanon. It has also adopted resolutions asserting that the basis for a settlement on the Palestinian track runs through the establishment of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure, internationally recognized borders.

Those resolutions have not been implemented. Tension and instability have continued in the Middle East. The Palestinian people are the only people in the world whose issue has not been resolved and who have not obtained their right to their legitimate self-determination, freedom and independence, or indeed to set up their own independent State.

The time has come for us to review our calculations regarding the way in which we tackle the issue and to

review the approach of the past, which has been one ba[illegible] on conflict management rather than on ending co[illegible]ict. That requires, inter alia, avoiding double standards. It requires avoiding dual measures. With the exception of one or two resolutions adopted in the 1940s — and more than 200 have been adopted since then — how strange that not a single one has the Council acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. We therefore very much want the Security Council to review the matter, and soon.

The Syrian crisis is deteriorating and escalating day by day. The fact that the Syrian Government persists in seeking a military security solution, including through the use of heavy weapons and military aircraft against its own people, and the fact that it refuses to respond to all initiatives, including the initiatives of the League of Arab States, have now confronted us with a serious and tragic situation. More innocent Syrians continue to be kil[illegible]d. The number of refugees flooding neighbouring States is increasing. The spectre of a sectarian civil war darkens Syria's skies and indeed the skies of the entire region and provides a warning of a potential regional and international catastrophe that will affect all and take years to resolve, involving threats to international peace and security as well.

The League of Arab States has been eager to cooperate with the United Nations to resolve the crisis from the very beginning. Indeed, a Joint Special Envoy was appointed by the two organizations in a new initiative based on joint action. The League of Arab States has turned to the Security Council and called on it, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the powers entrusted to it, to maintain international peace and security; to take the necessary measures to compel the implementation of the resolutions adopted by this very Council; to implement the plan set out by Kofi Annan, the former Joint Special Envoy of the League and the United Nations; to implement the final document of the 30 June meeting of the Action Group on Syria in Geneva, which was agreed by consensus and with the participation of the Permanent Five of the Security Council; and to lay the foundation on which to begin a political transformation in Syria towards a democratic regime that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We believe that the very first step is to stop the bloodshed in Syria, so as to begin the transformation leading to a healthy democratic regime that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to a life of freedom and dignity.

However, once again, the Security Council failed to achieve any of those objectives because of a disagreement among the permanent members, which is, frankly, most lamentable. And, I regret to say this, those resolutions have remained dead letters; they are not being implemented. The serial killing, bloodshed and destruction continue unabated. Let me state to Council members very clearly: if we want the mission of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, to succeed, the Security Council must support him in deeds, not just in words. And it can do so by compelling implementation of its resolutions in a way that is binding on all parties. Binding resolutions must be implemented in a binding manner.

The challenges confronting peace and security, on which we may cooperate, are many and multifaceted. Some are traditional, some are nascent and spreading rapidly in this era of developing modern technology. In the past few years, the world has witnessed very disturbing events because of actions that insult Islam and our Prophet. We fully reject and condemn the violent reactions in some Arab countries, including irresponsible and reprehensible attacks against some foreign embassies and facilities, acts that most regrettably led to the killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya and other innocent citizens. While we reject such actions, which are not in any way justifiable, we would like to sound the alarm that insulting religions, faiths, and their symbols is, indeed, a matter that threatens international peace and security.

The Charter of the United Nations begins with, "We the peoples of the United Nations", thereby establishing the principle that relations among people are the basis of international peace and security. Therefore, the international community must firmly deal with anything that returns us to the abhorrent concept of racism. We prize the values of freedom of expression. We believe that such principles must be respected and maintained. However, we do not see any relation between freedom of expression, which aims at enriching culture and building civilization, on the one hand, and activities that merely offend and insult the beliefs, cultures and civilizations of others, activities that incite hatred and violence. If the International Bill of Human Rights protects freedom of religion and faith, it is not merely affirming the right to build houses of worship and practise a faith, it is also stating the right of religionsto be treated with deference. Faiths

must be respected and not abused or insulted. Since the international community has criminalized bodily harm, it must criminalize psychological and spiritual harm as well.

It is now clear that insulting religions and faiths is a phenomenon that threatens international peace, security and stability. The League of Arab States calls for the establishment of a binding international legal framework, based on resolution 1618 (2005), in order to combat the denigration of religions and ensure that religious faiths and their symbols are respected. Such a framework would also be based on articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We must work together towards a dialogue that increases understanding between cultures and civilizations and encourages tolerance. Cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Security Council, on the one hand, and the League of Arab States, on the other, to confront the challenges in the Middle East should take various forms. In Yemen, efforts must be intensified to support the Government in overcoming the consequences of the political crisis and its economic repercussions and to move forward towards reconstruction and rebuilding the State. As for the situation in Libya, we hope that the appointment of Mr. Tarek Mitri as the new Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya will help to promote cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and its representatives in Libya, to provide assistance to the Libyan people in rebuilding the State and reconstructing the country.

The cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Somalia deserves credit for successfully ending the transitional period in Somalia and has initiated the creation of permanent institutions. There has been success in Darfur and in the relations between the Sudan and South Sudan where tensions must not be allowed to return. Therefore, the League of Arab States has set out an initiative to support the humanitarian situation, in both Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, in cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union and with the support of the Security Council. I hope that President Al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir will reach a definitive agreement on the controversial issues in Addis Ababa, and I hope that this Council will give the necessary time to do so.

Let me take this important opportunity to refer to a serious challenge facing our region. At the end of this year, we are to take a step long awaited by the world. It is a practical move towards establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We believe that it will mark the beginning of the road towards an international conference to be held in Helsinki with the participation of all States of the Middle East. Three permanent members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General have a mandate to organize the conference. It requires the formal support of the Council. We believe that the establishment of such a zone would eliminate the spectre of a conflagration with the use of non-conventional weapons in our region.

In dealing with the Middle East, we should not look upon it merely asa region of conflict and threats, for it is also a region full of hope, aspirations and possibilities. The challenges confronting it are multifaceted. There are political and military challenges, but there are also development and humanitarian challenges. Cooperation on all those and other issues requires updating and review and moreeffective relations between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, as well as new mechanisms. I should like to put forward some proposals in that regard.

First, we believe that the agreement on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States (General Assembly resolution 44/7) signed in 1989 must be updated to keep up with priorities and emerging and future challenges. Secondly, regular meetings, as well as those required by events, should be held between the Security Council and the League of Arab States, represented by the presidency of the Arab Summit Conference, the presidency of the Council of Ministers of the League, and the Secretary General of the League. Thirdly, the status of the cooperation meetings held between the United Nations and the League of Arab State needs to be enhanced so as to enable them to deliver programmes which are effective, particularly with regard to preventing and resolving disputes and peacekeeping. Fourthly, greater importance must be attached to cooperation between the two organizations relating to humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, I reiterate my thanks and appreciation to the President of the Council for his initiative to hold this high-level meeting. At the same time, allow

me to thank all of the Ministers who have travelled from afar to participate in the meeting. I hope that it signals the beginning of a new interaction between the two organizations to support peace and security in the Middle East, with a view to transforming the region from one of conflict and crises to one of security and stability, whose peoples enjoy peace and prosperity, as well as one capable of regaining its historic status as a source of knowledge and a beacon of human civilization. Throughout the world, the Security Council is considered the source of international peace and security, and I hope that will prove to be the case.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. El Othmani (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany for his initiative in organizing this open debate on the issue of peace and security in the Middle East and cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States towards achieving objectives common to both organizations. We reiterate to them the confidence and support of the Kingdom of Morocco in their efforts. In that respect, the Middle East region has, over the centuries, been the cradle of civilization that enriched the heritage of man. It was also the stage for a number of clashes that degenerated into fully-fledged conflicts and from which the peoples of the region have suffered and continue to suffer today.

The ongoing crisis of the Palestinian people lies at the very heart of the problem of achieving peace and security in the Middle East region and holds back the present and future of entire generations. That is why urgent action to resolve the conflict is necessary. Despite ongoing efforts over the past few years, the current conflict remains unresolved, owing to Israel's intransigence. At the same time, movements recently seen in the region aimed at achieving the legitimate aspirations of peoples for democracy and freedom necessitate an understanding of such aspirations.

My country welcomes the cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and considers the bolstering of such cooperation as more necessary than ever today. That is because we have seen developments in the actions of the League of Arab States and a renewed determination to strengthen the role of the League in serving the peoples of the region. As we have seen in the case of the crisis in Syria, the League of Arab States has proven that it can act effectively.

We highly appreciate the German presidency's initiative to issue a presidential statement calling for tangible measures to promote such cooperation. I commend the measures highlighted by the Secretary General of the League of Arab States on the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

We must spend a few minutes considering the Palestinian question, which, today more than ever, deserves particular attention. It is unfortunate that Israel has continued its systematic defiance of United Nations resolutions. In that respect, we must take note of the settlement construction policy, as it is a flagrant violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. That policy has become a major obstacle to the peace process. It reflects disdain for international agreements and even undermines the peace process. Moreover, we must consider the acts of violence committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian citizens. It is unfortunate that the response of the international community has fallen far short of justice for those people.

Let us also not forget the suffering of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners, some of whom have been detained or imprisoned since before the signing of the Oslo Agreements in 1993. In spite of all of that, the issue remains as yet unresolved.

There are also Israel's attempts to alter the demographic and cultural nature of the city of Jerusalem. In spite of the efforts of the international community, the settlement construction has continued in East Jerusalem, including ongoing work on the Al-Aqsa mosque compound. In spite of all of the appeals, Israel has continued its operations to destroy other sites that hold particular importance for the three monotheistic religions.

Facing all of those challenges, the King of Morocco, His Majesty Mohammed VI, presides over the Jerusalem Committee. The Kingdom of Morocco therefore calls for a halt to all of the construction work, which continues to destroy important sites, as well as all activities against the Islamic nature of the city. In addition, we urge the international community to

take urgent action to protect the cultural heritage of Jerusalem.

Certain ongoing Israeli policies consist of imposing sanctions against the Palestinian people and thus reflect disdain for all international instruments and international law. The closure policy carried out in the occupied Palestinian territories and the ongoing inhuman blockades conducted in the Gaza Strip since 2006 have all led to a humanitarian crisis of intolerable suffering that worsens each day.

Speaking in this forum and based upon our profound conviction of the importance of establishing peace and security in the region, we note the fact that our goal requires Israel's acknowledgment of the law and renunciation of its hostile policies against the defenceless Palestinian people, which seek to impose a logic of force as well as a fait accompli. We call on the international community to urge Israel to respect international agreements and those reached between the parties concerned.

We cannot omit to mention the suffering of our brothers the Syrian people. In that regard, we wish to express our indignation at and condemnation of the violence inflicted by the Syrian regime against civilians. We must reaffirm the necessity of bringing an immediate end to those acts of violence, in order to launch a political process that involves every sector of Syrian society and thus to achieve the Syrian people's aspirations to a politically democratic, pluralist regime based on a framework of the national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, with no foreign military intervention.

In that regard, I would like to reaffirm the importance of international and Arab efforts to find a settlement for the Syrian crisis, including through the mission of the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Indeed, we commend all the efforts being made to resolve this crisis. Morocco will host the fourth meeting of the Group of the Friends of Syria at the end of this month, and we hope that the meeting will help to mitigate the terrifying nightmare of the Syrian people.

The Middle East faces many challenges today that the Security Council is required to attempt to resolve, by virtue of its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, in order to help foster an atmosphere of peace and prosperity in the region. There is no doubt that acts that insult Islam, and any kind of disdain or attack on its Prophet or religion or incitement to hatred, all take us further away from the principle of tolerance and the essential virtues of dialogue and respect. We repudiate such acts of provocation, just as we repudiate any act of violence targeting innocent victims or property. I would like to recall that the Kingdom of Morocco, at the highest levels, condemned the attack on the American Consulate in Benghazi that led to the deaths of the United States Ambassador to Libya and three of the consular staff. We also call for respect for holy sites and property.

Once again, we reiterate that the cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations is vital, and we hope that it will grow deeper.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.

Mr. Fabius (France) (*spoke in French*): I have some observations to make on this very important subject. My first, which I think we would all agree on, is that when the Arab Spring, as we call it, began almost two years ago, it gave rise at the start to many hopes for peace, dignity, freedom and democracy. Today, however, we are concerned. We are concerned about violence, extremism, radicalization, exploitation of religious beliefs and certain groups' willingness to provoke confrontation between Islam and the West.

It seems to me that in the face of such challenges, there are few possible positions — indeed, only one or two — to take. Certainly that is France's understanding. We should show solidarity with these movements, because in those of our countries where there have been revolutions, even when the circumstances have been different, we know from experience that revolutions go through highs and lows. Events are never linear, and we must show our solidarity with the best parts of such movements, while at the same time — and I stress this point — maintaining high expectations. That is because the way in which the Arab spring has sometimes progressed, and sometimes gone off the rails, shows that we should be very careful about a number of central issues: human rights, women's rights, the rejection of terrorism and respect for communities and minorities. That is the first comment I have to make, which I think will be shared by everyone here.

My second observation concerns Syria. It would be strange if we did not mention this tragic situation. When I was preparing this short statement, I wrote that

on that day, the conflict had resulted in 27,000 deaths. We understand from recent reports that the number is now 30,000, and according to our Joint Special Representative, Mr. Brahimi, it is growing.

I am sure we all agree that it is shocking to international public opinion that we, the Security Council of the United Nations, have so far been unable to ensure the unity and security of these nations. I will not point a finger, but it is shocking that so far the Council has been unable to act. I would like to emphasize two risks, which are not mutually exclusive, in the Syrian crisis. If the situation continues, there is a very high risk that Syria will explode, and I use that expression advisedly. And everyone who wishes to see stability in a region that has already been profoundly affected will find that it is a dramatic explosion and one for which, at that point, there will be no solution. At the same time, we run the risk — already partly a reality — that extremism will gain ground. We all here have the same information: whatever beliefs any one of us may hold, we must acknowledge that there are extremists who have invaded Syrian territory.

In that regard, I would like to make another observation. If, as we sometimes do, we could discuss matters among ourselves, away from the cameras, I know of no one in the Council who would support the notion that Bashar Al-Assad's regime will ultimately still be there. I do not want to mention anyone in particular, but no one with whom I have discussed the issue would support the possibility of Mr. Al-Assad's remaining in place for any length of time; yet he is still there.

So that is the question: since we know that this regime will come to an end — and from the point of view of France, the sooner the better — how can we reconcile those two things? He is there, but he must go. How can we ensure that that happens in the most peaceful manner possible and without plunging the country into even worse chaos? As it stands, we have not been able to provide an answer to that, but what the entire world has been demanding of us is to live up to our name. The Security Council should be able, we hope, to provide an answer in the next few weeks.

France, for its part, has mobilized its efforts in several areas: humanitarian and medical aid; the unification, as far as possible, of the Syrian resistance; and the consolidation of the liberated zones. We are ready to help on all those fronts.

Here I would like to highlight the remarkable role that Secretary General of the League of Arab States has played, since the beginning, in the Syrian crisis and the excellent cooperation that he has headed up with the United Nations. He has reacted quickly, firmly and with courage since the beginning of the crisis. He suspended Syria from the League, which was not easy. He did not hesitate to adopt sanctions to cut off the regime's financing and weapons supply routes. He introduced the idea of a political transition being necessary in Syria, a goal that is now at the heart of the mandate entrusted to our Joint Special Representative, Mr. Brahimi. When the Council decided to send an observation mission to Syria, it was able to benefit from the experience that the League had gained. The League launched an important process, which included Morocco's presentation of a draft resolution to the Council and the General Assembly's adoption of two resolutions presented by the Arab League (resolutions 66/253 A and B). Those resolutions were adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States, thus confirming that Bashar Al-Assad's regime is isolated on all sides. I want, therefore, to pay tribute to the work that the Secretary General of the League has carried out, together with his colleagues, and take this opportunity to call on our Council once again to voice its complete confidence in Mr. Brahimi in carrying out his mission, which is, of course, very difficult.

The last point I would like to highlight, as others before me, is that it is impossible to deal with the issues facing the Arab world — and in a more general sense, the entire world — without highlighting the stalemate in the peace process between Israel and Palestine. France hopes for a relaunching of the peace process. We encourage the parties to return to negotiations. I reiterate once again that the goal must be to achieve an independent, viable and peaceful Palestinian State and to guarantee Israel's security. But here too I would caution that, for years and years — and this goes for all of us who were following this matter — we have known, deep down, what the solution was. The problem has been to get the parties to agree, and we did not succeed. But today, given the developments on the ground, the danger is that the solution itself could be compromised, and that danger is extremely serious.

I would like to again pay tribute to the commitment of the League of Arab States to resolving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. I would hope that solutions would be found very quickly to the Palestinian Authority's

financial difficulties and thus progress would be made. I would add once again that there is no lasting peace without justice, and there will be no lasting peace in that area of the world if we do not ourselves provide a solution to the problem that has dragged on for decades.

I conclude by once again thanking our friend, Minister Guido Westerwelle, for having taken the initiative of holding this meeting. It enables us to reiterate the importance that we attach to the work of the League of Arab States and our hope that the United Nations and the League will be able to work increasingly well together, with full determination and success.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mrs. Rodham Clinton (United States of America): I thank you very much, Minister Westerwelle, for calling us together at this critical moment to discuss peace and security in the Middle East on the heels of two tumultuous weeks, during which violent protests rocked countries across the region. Although anger was directed against my country, the protests exposed deep rifts within new democracies and volatility that extremists were quick to incite and exploit.

As President Obama made clear yesterday in his address to the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.6), the United States rejects the false choice between democracy and stability. Democracies make the strongest, most capable partners. We know that it takes a lot of hard work and oftentimes struggle, but the fact of new emerging democracies here in the twenty-first century should be cause for great satisfaction and hope.

These emerging democracies, however, need champions, not fair-weather friends. During this past week, as I met with leaders from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen, I expressed to each of them America's unwavering support for their countries' continued journey along the democratic path. But making good on the promise of those transitions will take many hands working on many fronts. Of course, there are political and economic dimensions to the work that must be done, but today I would like to focus on the security concerns, because that has to be the starting line on the road to true democracy.

Of course, the Arab revolutions come from within, and the greatest responsibility for their success or failure lies with the people living them each day. But the nations gathered in this Chamber also have a powerful stake in seeing that those democracies succeed, and it is our shared responsibility to help countries in transition to find the right path forward.

International support is critical. Consider what happened when the League of Arab States and the Security Council came together to protect civilians in Libya. That show of solidarity helped produce a strong Security Council resolution (resolution 1973 (2011)) that saved Benghazi from destruction at the hands of a tyrant. Thanks to the support of that broad coalition, the people of Libya now have the chance to write their own future. We saw, earlier this year, Libyans turning out in droves to cast their ballots, most for the first time in their lives.

Then, this past Friday, we saw thousands of Libyans pour into the streets to condemn the attack on the United States diplomatic post in Benghazi that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. They made it clear that those who would promote violence and division do not speak for the new Libya and that armed bands who would sever Libya's ties with the world are not welcome. The new Government of Libya is working closely with us to find the murderers and bring them to justice.

Now, each country in transition has its own security challenges, and therefore each one needs our support in different ways. In Tunisia, where the Arab awakening began, extremists seek to hijack its progress, but Tunisians are working steadily to dismantle a long legacy of dictatorship and lay the foundation for sustainable democracy. The riots underscored the challenges of building security forces focused on protecting people, not regimes. Those nations are not the first to struggle with the challenge of policing a new democracy, and the international community has stumbled in the past, failing to offer needed support or offering the wrong kind of support.

So we should heed the lessons we have learned from our successes and our failures, including this most basic understanding: training, funding and equipment will only go so far. It takes the political will to make hard choices and tough changes that will build strong institutions and lasting security, so I am pleased that Tunisia has agreed to host a new international training centre that will help security and criminal justice officials pursue policies grounded in the rule of law and human rights.

Egyptians chose their leadership for the first time in history, and we are committed to helping that transition succeed. The Egyptian people, proud of the freedoms they have claimed, must decide what kind of country they want to build, and the choices of the largest Arab nation will echo far beyond its borders. Like all nations, Egypt knows that it too has responsibilities, not only to its own citizens but also to its neighbours and the international community — responsibilities to honour international commitments, to share power broadly, to keep faith with all the Egyptian people, men and women, Muslim and Christian. We want to help Egypt and all new democracies live up to these vital responsibilities.

In Yemen, we are working through the Gulf Cooperation Council-led transition process. But providing basic security for the Yemeni people is a great challenge that is heightened by Yemen's unique needs. Yemen has a fast-growing population of young people and not enough jobs, a familiar story, not only through the region but the world. In addition, Yemen is facing the depletion of their oil and water supplies, and Al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula remains a serious threat. The urgency of these threats must be matched by the urgency of our response. In the Friends of Yemen meeting later this week, countries are coming together to address Yemen's challenges, in both the immediate and the long term.

Unfortunately, in the Syrian Arab Republic President Bashar Al-Assad clings to power, and his campaign of brutality has sparked a humanitarian crisis. The United States has committed more than $100 million to help the Syrian people, and we continue to insist that the violence must end and a political transition without President Al-Assad must move forward. The League of Arab States suspended Syria from its activities and has strongly condemned the Al-Assad regime's brutal violence against its own people. The Arab League created a plan for peaceful political transition that was endorsed by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly, a resolution that launched Arab League and United Nations mediation efforts, led first by the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, and now by the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Yet the atrocities mount while the Security Council remains paralysed. I would urge that we try once again to find a path forward that can bring the Security Council together on the urgent business of both ending the violence in Syria and preventing the consequences that all of us around this table fear.

Although this forum was not primarily intended to discuss the peace process, I certainly would like to reiterate United States President Barak Obama's message from yesterday. The future of Israel and Palestime must belong to those who embrace the hard work of peace, not those who thrive on conflict or who reject the right of Israel to exist. The United States stands ready and prepared to work towards a just agreement to finally accomplish our clear goal: a secure Jewish State of Israel and an independent, secure, prosperous Palestine, fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

No discussion of the Middle East would be complete without a discussion of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the profound threat its activities pose to the region and beyond. Despite numerous demands by the Council, Iran still has not taken the necessary steps to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency and to resolve doubts about its nuclear programme. In addition, Iran continues to sponsor terrorist groups and smuggle weapons for the Al-Assad regime's use against the Syrian people. Meanwhile, the Iranian people themselves suffer gross violations of their rights at the hand of their own Government.

Syria's challenges, like these, call for leadership and partnership. Yesterday, I was privileged to sign an agreement with the Arab League through its Secretary General, Mr. Nabil Elaraby. I was delighted that Secretary General Elaraby and I could build on the unprecedented cooperation of the last two years. We support Germany's call to make Security Council and Arab League cooperation more systemic and sustainable. The United States is also one of 28 countries and international organizations working through the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition to support democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa. When violence came to our doorstep at embassies around the globe, this body joined the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union, and the European Union to give voice to the world's condemnation of the attacks and call for restraint. They stood with us and now we must stand together in support of the common aspirations of the people, of all people, for security and safety for our families, the freedom to live lives according to our own conscience, the dignity that comes only through self-determination.

As President Obama said yesterday, the United States will never shrink from defending those values,

and we will not walk away from those new democracies. We are not alone in this commitment. That is the work of all responsible nations, and we look forward to working closely with anyone who speaks out on behalf of our shared values.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane (South Africa): South Africa expresses its appreciation to Germany, particularly to our colleague, Minister for Foreign Affairs Guido Westerville, for organizing this timely debate, which provides an opportunity for us to reflect on the peace and security situation in the Middle East, especially in light of current events taking place in the region. We wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil Elaraby, for their respective statements.

The Charter of the United Nations gives the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It also recognizes the complementarity between the roles of the United Nations and regional organizations in that respect. Political and strategic alignment between the Security Council and regional organizations has demonstrated effective results, as we have seen in the cases of Somalia and the Sudan. Coordination should be enhanced and become more formalized and structured, which is why South Africa has consistently championed the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

We also pioneered the adoption of resolution 2033 (2012) to further strengthen that relationship, particularly between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Security Council. Cooperation between regional organizations is equally important, especially in instances in which there is overlapping membership, such as in the case of the League of Arab States and the African Union. In such situations, regional organizations should collaborate in developing close regional solutions to common challenges, such as resolution of conflicts. In that regard, we look forward to the joint consultative ministerial meeting between the Peace and Security Council of the AU and the League of Arab States scheduled to take place in New York on 27 September.

In the case of the Middle East, we have to recognize that the League of Arab States is the organization best placed to have a deeper appreciation of the dynamics within which conflicts in the Arab world take place and to provide conflict-specific solutions. South Africa appreciates the efforts of the League in promoting peace in the Middle East region, especially efforts at furthering the Middle East peace process, the oldest peace and security item on the agendas of both the United Nations and the League. It is therefore apt that the United Nations is strengthening its engagement with the League. The appointment of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria was demonstrative of that cooperation. It would also be appropriate for the Secretary-General, in consultation with the League, to explore modalities for further enhancing cooperation. In its cooperation with the League, the Council should be consistent and not selectively cooperate on matters that serve the national interests of some of its members.

The events in the Middle East over the past 19 months have had a significant impact on the region and the rest of the world. The complexities underlying those events underscore the fact that no individual countries or organizations can address the developments on their own. The need for cooperation among States and international organizations when dealing with cross-cutting issues of peace, security and development is therefore paramount.

Equally, the underlying causes of those uprisings, including long-standing conflicts, have to be addressed in a coordinated manner. In the Middle East, we have not seen such an approach. There has been swift international reaction to some, while in others such cooperation is lacking, and, as a result, there has been no significant movement towards resolving the conflict.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League on the Middle East peace process has been most disappointing. The Arab League has consistently played a significant role in trying to find a resolution to the conflict, including through the adoption of the Arab Peace Initiative. Unfortunately, the Security Council has yet to provide effective and meaningful support for the League's efforts. Instead, we have relied on the Middle East Quartet, whose efficacy is increasingly being questioned, especially because its composition excludes the League and regional representatives.

Exactly one year ago, in September 2011, the Middle East Quartet committed itself to the resumption

of the direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine by September 2012. That deadline has come and gone, with no significant progress towards the resumption of talks.

As a result, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to deteriorate sharply. The construction of illegal settlements, which violates international law and the resolutions of the Council, remains the major stumbling block to the viability of an independent Palestinian State and the resumption of the peace talks.

South Africa laments the failure of the Council to agree to the admission of Palestine as a Member of the United Nations, despite the overwhelming support of and endorsement by the League. We welcome the Arab League's decision to revive Palestine's bid for United Nations membership and call on the international community to provide support for a permanent and sustainable political solution, namely, the implementation of the two-State solution, which provides for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Regrettably, years of failed diplomacy and oversight by the Security Council have resulted only in a hardening of positions by the occupier, increased abject poverty and suffering by the people of Palestine, and continued insecurity for the people of both Israel and Palestine. Perhaps it is time to consider a new approach. The League is well placed to take the lead and to ensure that Palestine's cause again becomes a priority of the Council.

With regard to the situation in Syria, we condemn the ongoing violence, which continues unabated. Meanwhile, the Security Council remains divided on this issue. South Africa emphasizes that the Security Council and the League of Arab States should address the Syrian crisis in a balanced manner, by applying pressure on all sides to stop the violence, and stop it immediately, to establish a ceasefire and comply fully with their respective obligations under the six-point plan and the Geneva action group communiqué.

Those assisting either party militarily are worsening the situation and prolonging the bloodshed. We call on those involved in such initiatives to refrain from them in assisting the efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table, in order to launch a credible Syrian-led and —owned political process that will lead to a legitimate transitional arrangement that is aimed at established a democratic, pluralistic society that meets the legitimate aspirations of all the Syrian people. The resolution of the conflict should also preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

In conclusion, the inability of the Council to deal with the situation in Palestine and in Syria underscores the need for Council reform. The absence of reform renders cooperation with regional organizations vitally important as the unreformed Council attempts to grapple with contemporary threats to international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I join other speakers in expressing my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting, which deals with a very important issue.

The Arab world is living through radical and painful transformations. Their impact is already being felt and will be felt for quite a long time, both in the region and globally. Of particular concern are the attempts to instigate inter-ethnic and interreligious discord on a global scale. It is necessary to stand in the way of those whose actions insult the feelings of believers and set people of different religions against one another. It is equally unacceptable to respond to provocations with acts of terror, which can have no justification, especially when diplomats and United Nations personnel are the targets thereof.

The process of change is caused by the aspirations of people to a better life and justice and to realize their political rights and freedoms. We share and understand those feelings. They are in line with the philosophy underlying Russian foreign policy, which is based on the assumption that all peoples should determine their own destiny independently.

The developments in the Middle East and North Africa confirm once again the need to respect the key principles of the Charter of the United Nations, above all the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in their domestic affairs and the non-use or threat of force.

Speaking today at the Kremlin, President Vladimir Putin emphasized that the primacy of international law must be ensured in the international arena and within States. The path to a lasting solution to problems in that respect is through extensive dialogue and the achievement of national reconciliation.

Today the strife that has engulfed the Arab world is concentrated in the situation in Syria. We condemn all acts of violence and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, whoever the perpetrator may be — the Government of Syria or the armed opposition. However, a significant share of responsibility for the continuing bloodshed rests upon those States that are instigating Bashar Al-Assad's opponents to reject the ceasefire and dialogue and at the same time demanding the unconditional capitulation of the regime. Such an approach is unrealistic and, in fact, encourages the use of terrorist tactics, to which the armed opposition is resorting to more and more often. The refusal by some members of the Security Council to condemn those terrorist acts is of deep concern and calls into question the fundamental role of the Security Council in countering terrorism in all of its manifestations.

There can be no doubt that military methods, and especially outside military interference, pose serious threats to regional security, with unpredictable consequences. A sustainable settlement can be achieved only through negotiations and a quest for compromises that take into account the interests of all religious and ethnic groups of Syrian society.

There is a basis for achieving that goal: the communiqué of the action group, endorsed in Geneva on 30 June as follow-up to resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and the Kofi Annan plan. That communiqué reflects a consensus among all Security Council permanent members, members of the League of Arab States, Turkey, the European Union and the United Nations Secretary-General. We strongly believe that the Geneva communiqué is still appropriate and relevant.

In that connection, I wish to call attention to the adoption today by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — the BRICS group — of a joint statement that objectively assesses the way out of the Syrian crisis and supports the Geneva communiqué as a basis for such actions. It is the basis for achieving consensus in the Security Council, the lack of which has been noted by some of our colleagues. The Geneva communiqué is objective and is the most realistic basis for such a consensus, in particular since all five permanent members signed it.

We hope that the Geneva consensus will also help Lakhdar Brahimi and his team to explore ways to overcome the crisis. We welcome any other constructive proposals on coordinating the international community's actions that could compel all Syrian parties to put an end to the violence and come to the negotiating table. In that context, we see some potential in the initiative of the President of Egypt, Mohamed Morsy.

Today as never before, many problems have accumulated on the political map of the Middle East. To date, no significant progress has been made in addressing them. There is no doubt that the political transformations that have been launched must be carried out to their logical end, taking into account the views of all groups of society in order to prevent the recurrence of turmoil. It is also clear that without modernization in the economic and the social spheres, it is hardly possible to make the Arab peoples feel that change is for the better and become immune to extremist attitudes.

One resource to explore in that regard is the responsible and targeted cooperation of the international community. It is essential that all outside players provide help to strengthen positive processes in the Arab world, including through mechanisms such as the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition.

Interaction with members of the League of Arab States is among the strategic priorities of Russia's foreign policy. Our country has never had any colonial interests in the Middle East or North Africa and has never unleashed wars for resources in those areas or imposed its configuration of the political map of the region. From the beginning our presence there has been aimed at promoting communication among nations and the coexistence of the various cultures and religions — what is commonly now called the dialogue of civilizations.

Based on many years of friendship and partnership between Russia and countries of the Arab world, we are today promoting reasonable and mutually respectful dialogue on the whole range of regional issues and are negotiating new forms of interaction. The Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum has been established as a framework for implementing trade, economic, cultural

and humanitarian projects. The Russian-Arab Business Council has also been launched.

We believe that the League of Arab States should play a concrete role in overcoming the challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa. It has in its arsenal a thorough knowledge of national psychology, traditions and historical experience and the capacity to formulate common goals for the region. The League's effectiveness will significantly increase as it builds its anti-crisis measures on the basis of giving priority to dialogue, mediation and peacekeeping, as provided for under the United Nations Charter. In general, we believe that it is essential to strengthen the overall coordination of the efforts of League and the United Nations.

We share a common position with members of the League of Arab States, namely, that despite the dramatic nature of the Arab Spring, such processes should not preclude the pursuit of ways to settle long-standing problems in the Middle East. First of all, that means achieving a just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the existing international legal basis, which, as we know, includes the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted at the League of Arab States summit in Beirut in March 2002 and supported by the Security Council. Russia resolutely calls for intensified efforts by the Middle East Quartet mediators, in close cooperation with the League of Arab States, for an early resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli talks. We believe that it is a serious mistake that the Quartet was unable to hold a ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the general debate of the current General Assembly session.

The recent outbreak of tension in the region, the attacks against foreign embassies in a number of countries and the death of American diplomats in Libya have again affirmed the need for an uncompromising fight against terrorism. It is essential that terrorists who are attempting to benefit from the transformation process be unanimously banished by the international community everywhere, be they in Libya, Iraq, Yemen or Syria.

There should be no double standards. All States without exception should ensure the careful and respectful treatment of the historical, cultural and religious values of all peoples and should refrain from insulting the feelings of believers. The most important task is to prevent the proliferation of new threats from emerging in the shadow of today's transformation processes: radicalization of the public mood, instigation of inter-religious and intra-religious clashes, and growth in the uncontrolled traffic of drugs, weapons and militants.

A significant added value could be created by the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East. That issue was raised by the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil Elaraby. Russia will continue to promote the earliest implementation of that important initiative and support the efforts of countries of the region and the League of Arab States, which should naturally play a leading role in convening a conference on the issue.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Harold Caballeros, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Caballeros (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like thank your Government, Mr. President, for having convened this ministerial debate and to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil Elaraby, for their respective interventions.

I am pleased to again participate in a Council debate, especially one that addresses such important a topic as the one you proposed. This topic, in essence, has two aspects. The first deals with peace and security in the Middle East, and the second falls more under developments in implementing Chapter VIII of the Charter — in this case, in the relationship between the Council and the League of Arab States.

Our delegation has spoken on many occasions in this Chamber on the first aspect. Consequently, our positions on various specific issues — such as the situation in Syria, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the situations in Lebanon and Yemen, as well as the so-called Arab Spring — are well known. We have also stated our concern over the inherent risks of nuclear development in some countries of the region, with the possibility of its eventual military use. The International Atomic Energy Agency has a crucial role to play in the elimination of that risk.

That having been said, despite the worrying developments of the past weeks, which have the potential to even further destabilize an inherently vulnerable situation, we generally welcome the direction of the changes under way in the Middle East, since they stem the grassroots of society and pursue universal goals that we can all share, such as freedom, justice, dignity and greater well-being for all.

My own region, Central America, and my own country, Guatemala, underwent important transitions in the 1980s and 1990s. The Guatemalan peace accords furthered a more democratic and tolerant society, respectful of human rights, with greater opportunities for all and governed by the rule of law. For more than 25 years, we have been struggling to meet those objectives. We have made very important achievements, but there are still some gaps and shortcomings. We know how difficult it is to foster change, but we will persist in that task with regard to our own country. Therefore we naturally desire the same for those nations in the Middle East that have launched processes towards more democratic, participative and inclusive systems of governance.

In Latin America, we have seen that freely elected Governments tend to resolve their differences, if they have them, with their neighbours peacefully and through negotiations. That is an important and encouraging lesson for our friends in the Middle East. Another lesson is that the intensity of potential conflicts diminishes when economies offer greater opportunities of well-being to their populations. Therefore, we believe that democracy, development, justice and peace go hand in hand.

One additional lesson is relevant to our discussion today and it relates to the second area to which I referred. We value the role played by regional and subregional organizations. In our part of the world, we have over 60 years of experience in benefitting from the institutions of Central American integration to forge a regional economic area and lay the basis for political union. That is why we have supported the increasingly broad alliances that the Security Council has built with regional and subregional entities, both in Africa and in the Middle East. We applaud the presence in this meeting of the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, whose partnership role in addressing the challenges of the Middle East is increasingly significant. We hope that role will deepen and broaden in the future, without in any way diminishing the exclusive purview of the Council. In cementing that partnership, the Council can count on the support of Guatemala.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Yang Jiechi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I am glad to attend this high-level meeting of the Security Council on peace and security in the Middle East. It is good to see Mr. Guido Westerwelle chair the meeting.

The Middle East is undergoing unprecedented changes. The political, economic and social impact of the international financial crisis on that region is unfolding. The people of that region have shown a strong desire to run their affairs independently and to seek change. Some countries are in a state of turmoil, while others have entered a critical stage of political transition and transformation. Regional hot-spot issues have become more severe, local conflicts have increased, and extremist and terrorist forces have intensified their infiltration efforts. Traditional and non-traditional security issues are entwined, exerting a greater impact on the region.

In short, the situation in the Middle East has become more complex and fragile and has attracted the broad attention of the international community. Peace, stability and development in the Middle East represent the shared aspiration of all people in the region and serve the common interests of the entire international community. Middle East affairs should be addressed mainly by the people of the region, and the future and destiny of the region should be in the hands of its own people.

The international community should respect the aspirations and calls of the people of the region for change and development. It should respect the distinctive religious and cultural characteristics of the region, heed the voices of the countries and peoples of the region on issues related to the Middle East, and urge the parties concerned to work out appropriate solutions through inclusive political processes and to strike the proper balance between reform, stability and development in order to achieve durable peace and common prosperity.

The Palestinian issue remains at the core of the situation in the Middle East. With drastic changes in the regional landscape, it is all the more imperative for the international community to recognize the importance and urgency of relaunching peace talks between Palestine and Israel. The international community should adopt a more active and constructive stance to promote peace talks, and urge the Palestinians and Israelis alike to take concrete steps to remove obstacles to peace talks, rebuild mutual trust, resume negotiations and make substantive progress at an early date.

Israel should assume responsibility for taking the first step. China supports the Palestinian people in

establishing, based on the 1967 borders, an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support Palestine's membership of the United Nations and other international organizations.

The Syrian issue concerns not only the future and destiny of Syria and its people, but also overall peace and stability in the Middle East. The crisis in Syria remains unresolved, and the situation is worrying. In the face of the complex and grave situation, the international community must have even stronger faith in peace and stay on the right track of seeking a political solution. We should support Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, in conducting impartial mediation, and urge all parties in Syria to earnestly implement relevant Security Council resolutions. Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point plan and the communiqué of the foreign ministers' meeting of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/522). We should also urge the parties to put an immediate end to the fighting and violence, protect civilians and create conditions for a Syrian-led political transition.

As a permanent member of the Council, China has faithfully fulfilled its obligations and acted as a positive force in seeking a political solution to the issue. China is ready to join the rest of the international community in an unremitting effort to resolve the Syrian issue in a just, peaceful and appropriate way.

The Iranian nuclear issue has a significant bearing on the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. China opposes the development and possession of nuclear weapons by any country in the Middle East. At the same time, we believe that the international community should respect the right of a country to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. China maintains that dialogue and cooperation are the only way to address the Iranian nuclear issue, and that it is ill-advised to resort to force or unilateral sanctions. The parties concerned should have firm confidence in and remain committed to a diplomatic solution. At the same time, they should be flexible and pragmatic, seek common ground while overcoming differences, work for early progress through dialogue and negotiations, and over time, achieve a comprehensive, long-term and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

Peace, stability and development in the Middle East will not be possible without the support and assistance of regional and international organizations. The United Nations Charter entrusts the Security Council with the primary responsibility for international peace and security. At the same time, in Chapter VIII of the Charter the Organization's founders also encouraged the peaceful settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements. The League of Arab States is an important multilateral organization in the Middle East. Over the years it has played an active role in upholding the lawful rights and interests of the Arab peoples, enhancing solidarity among Arab States and promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond.

In the current circumstances, it is of both practical significance and far-reaching strategic importance for the United Nations and the League of Arab States to strengthen their communication and cooperation and jointly safeguard peace, stability and development in the Middle East. Closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League should be based on the purposes and principles of the Charter. The principles enshrined in the Charter, including sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, are the basic norms governing international relations and important guidelines for addressing hot-spot issues.

In carrying out cooperation, the United Nations and the Arab League should aim to uphold those principles, safeguard the fundamental and long-term interests of the peoples of all countries in the Middle East, and maintain peace and stability in the region. Closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League should focus on the peaceful settlement of disputes. History has shown time and again that settling disputes through such diplomatic means as dialogue and negotiation is the only right and effective way to achieve durable peace.

As a regional organization, the Arab League has a unique and important role to play in encouraging the countries of the region to settle disputes through mediation, negotiation, good offices and other peaceful means. The United Nations should encourage the Arab League to stay the course of political settlement, build consensus and coordinate the efforts of countries of the region in order to improve the situation and achieve peace and stability.

Closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League should follow a holistic approach. That is of crucial importance. The causes of turbulence and conflict in the Middle East are mostly related to

economic well-being and ethnic and religious factors. The United Nations and the Arab League should pay greater attention and give more support to economic and social development in the region, help the region achieve development to improve people's lives, and encourage different ethnic groups and religions to show mutual tolerance, achieve reconciliation and live in harmony, so as to remove the economic and social breeding grounds for turbulence and extremist thinking.

China is a good friend to and partner of the Arab countries and people. We firmly support and help to promote their just cause. With respect to the issues of peace and security in the Middle East, China has always fulfilled its obligations in a constructive way. We stand for peace and oppose war; we stand for equality and oppose power politics; we stand for principles and oppose interference; and we stand for dialogue and oppose confrontation.

Bearing in mind the fundamental long-term interests of the peoples of the Middle East, China has made its own efforts to advance peace, stability and development in the region. China will, as always, take a constructive part in the mediation and settlement of hot-spot issues in the Middle East, support the United Nations and the Security Council in continuing to play an important role in addressing Middle East issues, and help put the region on a path of peace, stability, economic prosperity and social progress at an early date.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to join others in congratulating Germany on its successful presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely meeting on an important topic. We are also grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil Elaraby, for their briefings.

Today's meeting is taking place at an important time in the sense that the Middle East region is experiencing historic changes that testify to the desire and determination of its societies to shape their destiny. The transformation process has yielded encouraging trends towards ensuring respect for human rights and guaranteeing economic and social well-being for everyone. At the same time, there is an obvious need for an in-depth analysis of the root causes and ultimate implications of this complex process for the regional and global security architecture. While the international response to developments in the Middle East has varied in its essence and intensity, the primary role in maintaining adequate international engagement belongs to international and regional organizations, particularly to the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

It should be noted that not all regional organizations can boast of their ability and political will to understand the root causes of security problems and to contribute effectively to their resolution. The League of Arab States has proved to be one of those regional organizations that are able to take the lead in promoting peace, security and stability in the region. In that regard, we are pleased to see that cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States is motivated by the common objective of enhancing peace and security and helping the States of the region through this difficult period of their history. Their combined engagement and presence have been instrumental in carrying out important tasks in such areas as conflict prevention and resolution, crisis response and management, and the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

Against the background of regional fragilities, which go hand in hand with the challenges of the transformations experienced in the region, maintaining the high profile and ongoing active involvement of the United Nations and the League of Arab States has acquired increased importance. Therefore, mutually reinforcing cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States has become ever more essential for maintaining peace and security in the region and working out sound strategies to assist the States in transition.

The role of the League of Arab States as an insider in the region is particularly valuable in connecting regional specificities with the global dimension by interacting with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and field presences. The United Nations and the League of Arab States should further galvanize their efforts to achieve the best results for the States and peoples of the region.

In that regard, we commend the appointment of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria as an important step forward in the cooperation between the two

organizations, and we reiterate our full support for his activities.

The international community must continue to be consistent in its efforts to facilitate solutions to regional crises and conflicts based on the norms and principles of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, as required by the United Nations Charter. Azerbaijan strongly supports that approach in working to resolve protracted conflicts in different parts of the world.

While recognizing the historic opportunities that recent waves of transition have opened up for the Middle East, we should not neglect the long-standing security problems. Solving them is a prerequisite for maintaining peace, stability and sustainable development in the region. All stakeholders in the Middle East should regard the latest developments as a unique chance and an urgent call to take courageous steps towards achieving tangible results in the Middle East peace process. A comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is long overdue in that conflict, which undermines the security, stability and well-being of the entire region and has an impact stretching well beyond regional boundaries. We consider it essential for the Security Council and the League of Arab States to cooperate on this issue of paramount importance to all of us.

Once again, we cannot but express our deep concern over the recent escalation provoked by blasphemy against Islam. We strongly condemn all assaults against religions. At the same time, attacks on civilians, in particular diplomatic personnel, cannot be justified in any circumstances.

We would truly like to believe that, irrespective of all the challenges and difficulties, the pursuit of peace and progress in the Middle East will never be abandoned, and that the endeavours of its peoples to build stable, secure and democratic States will continue to be bolstered by the international community. In this context, we are confident that continued engagement by the United Nations and the League of Arab States, together with strengthened cooperation between them, consistent with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, will effectively contribute to peace and security in the region. As a member of the Security Council and an observer to the League of Arab States, Azerbaijan will continue its utmost efforts to that end.

In conclusion, I would like to express our full support for today's draft presidential statement, aimed at helping to develop effective cooperation between the two organizations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hague (United Kingdom): I, too, thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States for their words, and I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for proposing this debate on peace and security in the Middle East.

Over the past 18 months, the Arab Spring, as we have come to call it, has taken a different path in each country of the region. In some countries revolutions have been relatively swift. In Syria, as we know, horrifying violence continues to engulf the country almost a year and a half since protests began. In other countries, peaceful reform is under way. We respect the right of each country in the region to find its own path to reform, based on its unique cultures and traditions, but we will always stand up for our belief in the universality of human rights and freedom that is at the heart of democracy.

Indeed, that historic change has been driven by the people of the region demanding the greater political and economic freedom that is their legitimate right. History has shown that those Governments that draw their legitimacy from the consent of their people are best placed to deliver lasting peace and security. Where the social contract between citizen and State is based on trust and accountability, societies are able to flower; where it is based on fear, violence and the denial of rights, conflict and insecurity arise. That is why the Arab Spring is a moment of huge opportunity to build peace, security and prosperity for the region and, by extension, the world.

Alongside open inclusive, national structures, lasting peace and security also rely upon effective international and regional institutions. That is a lesson we ourselves have learned the hard way, reflected in the very history of how this body was created. And over the past 18 months, the League of Arab States has showed resolve and perseverance in working to achieve regional security and stability. I warmly commend the clear leadership it has demonstrated. It was decisive in calling for a no-fly zone in Libya. It has taken the lead in responding to the Syrian crisis, including efforts to

mediate between the Syrian opposition and regime, as well as to apply political, economic and diplomatic pressure on the regime to end the violence.

The decision to appoint a Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria is a clear indication of the growing positive cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League. We strongly support the work of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi and we do our utmost to support his efforts to resolve the crisis in Syria, just as we supported his predecessor, Mr. Kofi Annan. I fully support efforts to strengthen further the relationship between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and welcome the deepening of cooperation between those two bodies. That is important as there are urgent challenges at hand for which the United Nations and the League of Arab States bare a shared responsibility.

As the Syrian crisis continues to deepen, the risk of broader regional instability and conflict increases. Addressing such crises is exactly what the Security Council exists to do. That the Security Council has failed to act on its clear responsibilities in the case of Syria is inexcusable and shocking, as Mr. Fabius said earlier. It is a terrible indictment of the Council that over 22,000 people have died since it first failed to agree on a resolution to stem the violence. It is long past the time for the Council to use its collective weight to require the Syrian regime to end the violence and to impose serious consequences if it does not.

With regard to the Middle East peace process, I am also deeply concerned by developments on the ground, including continued settlement activity. I call on both sides to avoid steps that undermine the prospects of peace and to resume direct talks. We have long been clear that a Palestinian State is a legitimate goal, and the best way of achieving that is through a comprehensive agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. We want to see a solution to this conflict that gives the Palestinian people the State they need and deserve and the Israeli people long-term security and peace. Without that, lasting peace and security in the region will remain elusive.

It is remarkable how much has been achieved in the Middle East and North Africa since the Arab Spring began. In Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, citizens have voted in free elections for the first time in decades. Change has been led by the people of the region, and it is not for anyone else to impose their vision on the region. However, there is a crucial role for the international community to play in supporting peaceful reform. The United Kingdom is doing this through our Arab partnership by providing diplomatic and practical support to strengthen the political and economic participation of citizens in the Middle East and North Africa. We must act together to ensure that hard-won freedoms and rights are protected and that those still fighting for their legitimate rights receive our support, laying the foundations for lasting peace and security in the region. We must continue to work to ensure that the United Nations acts as a bridge for effective international cooperation to provide that support to the region. The people of the region deserve that promise and we must not fail them.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia.

Ms. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I join other members in congratulating Germany on assuming the presidency of the Council and you, Sir, for having convened this meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the League or Arab States for their presentations.

The work of regional organizations in the search for solutions to situations on the agenda of the Security Council is of the greatest importance. We are all aware of the work of the League of Arab States in the case of Lybia and the Gulf Cooperation Council in the case of Yemen. Regional organizations are, without a doubt, those with the greatest knowledge of the situations in their regions.

The Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa face great security challenges. Cooperation with regional organizations — such as the Arab League, the Economic Community of Western African States, the African Union and others — are of the utmost importance in achieving lasting solutions that also address the concerns of each region. The Council should promote close collaboration with regional organizations, giving priority to strategies aimed at conflict prevention, mediation and good offices. Regional organizations have a privileged position, unique access to key stakeholders, and exceptional knowledge of and experience with the diverse situations in their regions; hence the importance of their participation as strategic partners in carrying out actions that fit the particularities and needs of

each situation under consideration. Nevertheless, it is important to guarantee that the work of the Security Council and regional organizations harmonize with one another.

The concept paper before us (S/2012/686, annex) asks how cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in particular can be strengthened. In that regard, I believe that the holding of annual evaluation meetings, such as those that currently take place with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, including dialogue on conflict prevention, could be beneficial.

Cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States can and must be strengthened in order to confront the security challenges in the Middle East. The appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria a few months ago, and more recently, of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative are good examples of that cooperation.

I would like once again to condemn the attack in Libya on the American consulate in Benghazi, which resulted in the death of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and other officials. We cannot allow extremism and terrorism to demean human life. Tolerance and respect for cultural, religious, political and economic diversity must take priority in global relations.

I would like to refer to the situation in Syria. The Syrian crisis is a threat to peace in the Middle East, a region that has faced precarious security conditions for more than a year. We therefore deplore the inability of the Council to stop the violence and bloodshed and to facilitate a peaceful solution. In that regard, we must point out that the Council has not been able to reach an agreement to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it by Member States.

The humanitarian situation is alarming, as we discussed a few weeks ago in this very Chamber. We share the concerns about the flow of refugees into neighbouring countries, and today we wish to acknowledge in particular the efforts of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, which have taken in hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in recent months. The Syrian people have also suffered from internal displacement and destruction of their homes and infrastructure. We must redouble our efforts to find a negotiated political solution to that crisis, which is becoming more and more urgent by the day.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our call on all parties in Syria to immediately put an end to force and violence. We reiterate our concern with regard to the persistent deterioration of the human rights situation. I call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. While the primary responsibility to guarantee respect for and the protection of individual rights and fundamental freedoms of the population, including the right to life and the freedoms of expression and association, lies with the Syrian authorities, all parties involved are obliged to comply with the norms of international humanitarian law.

Despite the turmoil currently affecting region, the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must remain a priority of the efforts of the international community to achieve peace throughout the region. In this case, as in others, we must take advantage of the comparative advantage of the League of Arab States to overcome existing obstacles and restart negotiations aimed at establishing a Palestinian State living in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders and based on an agreement that will ensure the peaceful coexistence of the two nations. To achieve that goal, favourable conditions in the areas of human rights and international humanitarian law are necessary to foster renewed confidence and advance the negotiations. Colombia continues to support dialogue as a path to peace and prosperity, and will continue to urgently promote that point of view in the Council.

We support the draft presidential statement on effective cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elliot Ohin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Togo.

Mr. Ohin (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to commend the German presidency of the Security Council for organizing this high-level debate on the Middle East in the context of cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in maintaining international peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States for their respective briefings on the situation in the Middle East. Finally, I welcome the presence of my fellow Ministers for Foreign Affairs, which bears witness to the importance of the issue before the Council.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States dates back to 1950 and is highly important, particularly now that the international community is facing all types of threats, including armed conflict, terrorism, humanitarian crises, crises linked to extremism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The importance of the contributions of regional organizations to the maintenance of international peace and security, as stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations, no longer requires proof. At a time when serious conflicts and threats in the Middle East call for all available resources, it is more important today than ever to strengthen cooperation under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. That is not a choice, but a necessity that brings to mind a statement made by the former Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Chedli Klibi, during a meeting between the two organizations held in Tunis in 1983.

> "The League would very much like to consolidate and develop existing ties in all areas related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to cooperate by every means possible in the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations".

The advantage of the League of Arab States in its ability to bring States together to address issues that fall within the remit of the Security Council shows that its cooperation with the United Nations is essential and should be strengthened. That cooperation has taken many forms, notably during the Syrian crisis, in which the Arab League's initiatives have been supported by the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council in particular. The appointments of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria in February, and of the Joint Special Representative in August, following the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy, are examples of the readiness and commitment of the Secretaries-General of the two organizations to work together to seek a solution to the crisis.

The League of Arab States and the United Nations should continue to explore the ways and means necessary to help the Syrian people to end the tragedy that has already caused some 30,000 deaths and generated hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees. Moreover, that cooperation should extend beyond the Syrian crisis to other situations and conflicts in the region, where the League of Arab States has not been very visible. The increased involvement of the League in the settlement of all crises in the Middle East crises is desirable, not only because it is recommended by the Charter of the United Nations, but also because the League can suggest possible solutions that take into account the cultural, historical and sociological ties among parties to the conflicts.

While cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States has not yet achieved a solution to the Syrian crisis, it remains a framework for working together and seeking solutions in which the courage and resolve of its actors could prove beneficial. My country believes that the two organizations should further pool their efforts towards a settlement to that crisis and other conflict situations in the Middle East, such as in Yemen and Lebanon, and the nagging question of Palestine.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my delegation would like once again to welcome the Arab Peace Initiative for a settlement of the conflict. The implementation of that plan could calm tensions in the region. In that context, we urge all the parties concerned to work with a view to its harmonious implementation.

Cooperation between the League and the United Nations should be strengthened to ensure the necessary coherence among the initiatives and actions of the two organizations. That will undoubtedly require an updating of knowledge in all areas, particularly an enhanced climate of trust among the parties, as no today country or organization is fully capable of assisting a country or region to overcome a crisis. That objective formed the basis of resolution 2033 (2012) on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union. We welcome the meeting held by the two organizations in July in Vienna, at which they agreed to strengthen their partnership in all areas, in particular with respect to the situation in the Middle East.

Likewise, we welcome direct contact, on the one hand, between the Secretaries General of the two organizations, and on the other hand, among the specialized institutions of the League of Arab States and the bodies of the United Nations system. These initiatives reflect the need for the League of Arab States and the United Nations to develop a promising partnership that will provide solutions to the challenges and transformations under way in the Middle East. Such cooperation could be developed by strengthening the mechanisms that could emerge from regular meetings,

during which the two organizations could evaluate their partnership and agree on joint actions to prevent conflict or to seek appropriate ways and means to achieve lasting solutions to ongoing crises.

Along those lines, my country believes that the establishment of a United Nations liaison office at the League of Arab States, such as that at the African Union, would be desirable because it could certainly help to bolster exchanges of information and facilitate bilateral meetings. Consultations among the secretariats of the League of Arab States and the United Nations should, above all, include the Security Council with a view to deeper exchanges on all questions related to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in the Middle East.

Togo ardently hopes that this meeting will outline ways to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States with a view to ensuring effective action to resolve conflicts in the region. My country hopes to see the League of Arab States become an organization working for peace in close collaboration with the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ranjan Mathai, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India.

Mr. Mathai (India): Let me begin by joining others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on presiding over this high-level meeting on peace and security in West Asia and North Africa. I also want to thank the United Nations Secretary-General and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States for their valuable statements.

Developments in West Asia and North Africa have played a major role in shaping the history of the world since ancient times. The region has been the birthplace of major religions and great civilizations. By virtue of the genius of its peoples, its strategic location and its natural resources, the region has been a focus of considerable interest internationally. It is therefore not surprising that the momentous transformation that has taken place in several countries of the region since late 2010 has been of great interest to the world at large.

The general aspiration has been that those transformations should be peaceful and should lead to inclusive and democratic outcomes within their countries. The League of Arab States, as the most important regional organization, predating the United Nations, has played a significant role in the unfolding of events in the region and has guided the involvement of the international community in them. Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter recognizes the importance of regional organizations and their role in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Charter also provides a broad framework for the Security Council's cooperation with such regional organizations, while clearly stating that it is the Council itself that has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Cooperation between the Arab League and the United Nations began in the early 1950s. Both organizations have benefited from the convergence of their desire to maintain international peace and security, despite occasional differences. Enhanced partnerships between United Nations agencies and the Arab League at the institutional level in the fields of human development, capacity building and the empowerment of women and young people have been of great benefit to the region. That existing cooperation should now be further strengthened to help the countries of the region meet their peoples' aspirations to play a greater role in shaping their destiny. India stands ready to play its part in that regard.

It is important to underline that the Council's cooperation with regional organizations, particularly the League of Arab States, should also avoid selectivity. Cooperation with one regional organization should not come at the expense of another. The goal of peaceful resolution of conflicts should determine the Council's actions. The international community should guide all United Nations activities, including its cooperation with regional organizations. Both the United Nations and the League should use all the tools of diplomacy to help the countries concerned in their transition to an inclusive and participatory polity while maintaining social stability and cohesion. Their cooperation should encompass all the issues relevant to international peace and security, particularly the fight against terrorism. The principles of national sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity must be respected. It is also important that the peculiarities of each situation be kept in mind.

If there is one issue that requires the immediate attention of both the United Nations and the League of Arab States, it is the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That issue cannot be ignored while we focus on recent developments in the region. There can be no durable peace in West Asia without a just and comprehensive settlement, based on the realization

by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to a State of their own with internationally recognized borders, living side by side and in peace and security with Israel. We therefore urge both the Council and the Arab League to facilitate the resumption of the Middle East peace process as quickly as possible.

The League of Arab States has been playing an important role in resolving the Syrian crisis. We fully support a peaceful settlement of the conflict through a Syrian-led, inclusive political process, based on a firm rejection of any military intervention. We urge all sides, Syrian and foreign, to cooperate in good faith with the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, so that the Syrian crisis can be resolved without any further bloodshed.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jalil Abbas Jilani, Foreign Secretary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Jilani (Pakistan): At the outset, I would like to thank Germany for convening today's debate on an issue that is close to our hearts and a very important and long-standing item on the Security Council's agenda. I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and welcome the ministers attending today's debate. We also welcome the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Nabil Elaraby, to the Security Council for the third time in a few months, a sign of the increasing coordination between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

Pakistan's ties with the Arab world have a deep and continuing historical, cultural and religious underpinning. We regard the peace and progress of the Arab world as synonymous with our own. Pakistan supports cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in various areas, including the maintenance of peace and security, humanitarian assistance, development and human rights. Pakistan believes that regional organizations can play an important role in the pacific settlement of disputes. They are better placed to understand the realities and complexities of situations on the ground, and thus bring a complementary role and perspective to the United Nations.

The spirit of multilateralism lies in building bridges, finding common ground and pooling resources. The appointment of a Joint Special Envoy, and subsequently a Joint Special Representative, for Syria is an example of synergy flowing from multilateralism.

The Arab world is going through a period of uncertainty as well as reform. As a country born of a democratic struggle, and as a functioning and vibrant democracy, Pakistan fully supports the fulfilment of a people's legitimate aspirations. However, the decision for change must be channelled through peaceful means, and should be led and owned by the people themselves. Pakistan has always been opposed on principle to any outside interference, use of force or violence. Similarly, we feel that coercive measures lead to a hardening of positions and are seldom effective. Dialogue and engagement are the essence of multilateralism, and that should be maintained.

It is important to reiterate that the era of rejuvenation, often euphemistically termed the Arab Spring, should not bypass the people of Palestine. They have suffered under the yoke of tyrannical oppression and unlawful occupation for too long. The gentle winds of spring must visit the Palestinian territory and other occupied lands as well. The Security Council must not remain silent in the face of Israel's continued defiance of the collective will of the international community, its illegal settlement policy and its collective punishment of the Palestinians with the continued blockade of Gaza, which has now entered its sixth year.

We call on the League of Arab States to continue to play its crucial and unquestioned role in bringing those historical injustices to the world's attention and working towards a just settlement. The Security Council must fully support those efforts. We firmly believe that without a resolution of the core issue in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative, aimed at the re-establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, a comprehensive peace plan would not be possible.

The United Nations and the League of Arab States have been building institutional ties over the past few years. The presence here today of Secretary General Nabil Elaraby is proof of that. Apart from the area of peace and security, there has also been cooperation in other fields, ranging from counter-terrorism to disaster risk reduction and humanitarian issues. We hope that the United Nations and the League will build further on those linkages. Increased cooperation and coordination between them is in the interest of both organizations. We hope that such synergies will lead to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region, especially over the

attainment of the inalienable right to self-determination by the people of Palestine.

Pakistan strongly condemns the recent release of a defamatory video and the publication of derogatory caricatures in the newspapers. We endorse the Secretary-General's pronouncement that those are senseless and disgraceful acts.

They are indeed abhorrent examples of incitement to hatred and discrimination against Muslims under the pretext of freedom of expression and opinion. As we have witnessed, the global reaction to, and consequences of, those acts have a strong bearing on international peace and security. The international community must therefore take stock of those reprehensible acts and take concerted actions to introduce and implement adequate measures, including legislation, against such acts at all levels, in accordance with international human rights standards. There is an obvious need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation among all religions, cultures and civilizations for promoting harmony and coexistence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this high-level meeting on such an important issue. I also wish to thank you personally for presiding over it. I also thank both Mr. Ban Ki moon and Mr. Nabil Elaraby for their very valuable contributions to today's discussion.

These are indeed challenging times in the Middle East, where strong emotions and deep-seated grievances have again come to the fore, with tragic consequences. We were deeply saddened by the deaths of Ambassador Stevens and his colleagues in Benghazi, and we again wish to extend our sincere condolences to their families and the American people. There is simply no justification for such acts of violence or attacks against diplomatic missions. They must be unequivocally denounced and condemned. They are also attacks against all of us and the values enshrined in the Charter.

Now is a moment for restraint and sober reflection by all. Certainly, people in North Africa did not fight so bravely for their basic rights simply to have their dreams and legitimate aspirations hijacked by a few. Also, the distortion of religion to fuel hatred and to advance narrow extremist agendas must be vehemently condemned. It is imperative that we all work collectively to counter such destructive forces. As President Obama said yesterday, "violence and intolerance has no place among our United Nations" (see A/67/PV.6). Diversity is something that deserves to be celebrated, not feared.

The challenges of today's world demand common responses. In that sense, we believe that the Security Council could and should enhance its role and effectiveness as the primary body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security by developing strong complementary partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, as was the case in Libya, Syria and Yemen.

There are ample opportunities to increase the cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States, be it in the realms of preventive diplomacy, mediation, rapid response, conflict resolution or in the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter.

The United Nations and the League of Arab States must also build upon shared accomplishments. Such is the case in Libya, where, together with the African Union and the European Union, they can play a decisive role in supporting Libyans on their path to democracy, reconciliation, peace and prosperity. Such is also the case in Yemen. As the Secretary-General said, cooperation between the two organizations should not limit itself to political issues or the crisis of the day, but move to other areas, be they economic, social or humanitarian in nature.

The Middle East faces renewed risks as the bloody conflict in Syria rages on and the Middle East peace process remains in protracted stalemate. Both of those conflicts constitute serious threats to international peace and security and must be urgently resolved. Both the Security Council and the League of Arab States have specific responsibilities in this context that they cannot shy away from. There is a pressing imperative for them to renew efforts and work together with a view to reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting peace throughout the region.

In Syria the death toll continues to mount. The tragic humanitarian situation is worsening day by day, and widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights proceed unabated. We appeal to all parties in the conflict to abide strictly by the principles of international humanitarian law and to respect human rights. This terrible human tragedy could have been averted had the Syrian Government not responded to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people with

brutal force and shunned all attempts to promote a peaceful political solution.

Further militarization of the conflict will only entail further human suffering, threaten the integrity of Syria itself and destabilize neighbouring countries. There is no alternative to a political solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, allowing for a peaceful and democratic transition.

The appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, just as the previous appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan, underlines the cooperation between our two organizations. Mr. Brahimi can count on our full support. However, his chances of success will depend greatly upon the support he receives from the Security Council and the League of Arab States, as Mr. Elaraby rightly underlined.

Together, we must persuade the parties and stakeholders to view his appointment as an opportunity for them to rethink their options, end the violence and engage seriously in an inclusive Syrian-led political transition. To that end, the Council has to exert united, sustained and effective pressure on all sides, and on the Syrian authorities in particular in the light of their primary responsibilities.

Developments in the Arab world render a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict ever more urgent. That, however, will remain elusive as long as the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, remains unresolved.

In September 2011, President Abbas submitted the Palestinian application for membership to the United Nations, and the Quartet set a framework for the resumption of direct negotiations and a time frame for their conclusion. A year on, the parties have not yet engaged in a meaningful discussion on the core issues. As a result, the prospect of a free and sovereign Palestinian State is quickly withering away. Evidently, the instruments and tools we have relied on thus far have not succeeded and need to be reviewed, replaced or adapted.

Israel's intensified settlement activities, which are illegal, are eroding the very viability of the two-State solution, as Minister Fabius rightly underlined, undermining confidence and weakening moderate voices. At the same time, settler violence has proceeded unabated and vandalism against places of worship has increased. We appeal to Israel once again to cease settlement expansion and to act decisively against the perpetrators of those acts of violence.

The Security Council and the League of Arab States must renew efforts with a view to the swift resumption of meaningful direct talks based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the internationally endorsed parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative. In order to succeed, direct negotiations must also establish a clear and credible political time frame.

In the most immediate term, we must ensure that the Palestinian State-building achievements are not reversed due to the fiscal and economic predicaments that the Palestinian Authority is currently facing. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the problem remains a political one, namely, the continued occupation that curtails the development of a sustainable Palestinian economy, thus forcing Palestinians to be donor-dependent.

We fully understand Israel's legitimate security concerns, as we understand that an independent Palestine is not only an inalienable right but also a question of fundamental justice for the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, there are many issues where closer cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States can, and should, be further deepened. That would undoubtedly be in the interest of international peace and security, as well as of the stability and prosperity of a wide and still unstable region.

The President: Following consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf:

> "The Security Council reaffirms its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates that cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in matters relating to the maintenance of peace and security and consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter can improve collective security.
>
> "The Security Council recalls all its previous resolutions and statements of its President which underscore the importance of developing effective partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations in accordance with the

Charter and the relevant statutes of regional and subregional organizations.

"The Security Council expresses its appreciation for the briefings of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Nabil Elaraby.

"The Security Council recognizes and further encourages efforts by the League of Arab States to contribute to collective endeavours to settle conflicts in the Middle East peacefully as well as to promoting international responses to the transformations experienced in the region, while reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of regional countries and to the purposes and principles of the Charter.

"The Security Council welcomes the intensifying cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in the wake of these transformations which reflect the legitimate aspirations of all peoples in the region for freedom, political participation and economic and social well-being in a pluralistic society.

"The Security Council reiterates its commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reaffirms the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative. The Security Council also recalls its previous relevant resolutions.

"The Security Council, recalling its resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), welcomes the appointment of the Joint Special Representative for Syria of the United Nations and the League of Arab States as an important step forward in the cooperation between both organizations and expresses its support for his efforts in continuing the Secretary-General's good offices in that regard.

"The Security Council commends the members of the League of Arab States for their ongoing commitment to international peacekeeping and peacebuilding, including through the contribution of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

"The Security Council takes note of the general meeting on cooperation between the secretariats of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and their specialized organizations, held in Vienna from 10 to 12 July 2012.

"The Security Council acknowledges the intention expressed by representatives of both organizations to cooperate across a broad agenda of mutual concern, formulating adequate joint responses, where appropriate, to humanitarian crises, promoting human rights, freedom of expression, food security, environment protection, and the fight against terrorism and the illicit trafficking of drugs and arms, while reiterating the need to ensure that all United Nations efforts to restore peace and security also respect and promote the rule of law.

"The Security Council recalls its press statements of 12 and 14 September regarding recent attacks on diplomatic personnel and premises and reaffirms that such acts are unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever and by whomsoever committed. The Security Council stresses the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world. The Security Council underlines the common commitment of both the United Nations and the League of Arab States to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of tolerance and peace, and calls for enhanced cooperation in light of recent events to promote better understanding across countries, cultures and civilizations.

"The Security Council recognizes the importance of strengthening cooperation on capacity building with the League of Arab States in the maintenance of international peace and security.

"The Security Council expresses its determination to take effective steps to further enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to report, as appropriate, on further ways of strengthening institutional relations and cooperation between the two organizations."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2012/20.

I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco to make a further statement.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for delivering that important statement at the enf of our debate. I also thank you for your patience and perseverance in pursuit of ensuring the text's adoption.

The presidential statement (S/PRST/2012/20) constitutes a plus for the United Nations and for the League of Arab States. Given the unprecedented efforts that have characterized the actions of the League of Arab States over the past few months, this statement is certainly well-deserved. But it is also something that the United Nations wanted. It serves as a further milestone in strengthening relations between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. We would like to express our great satisfaction at the fact that the statement's last paragraph leaves the door open to even greater cooperation and strengthening of institutional relations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Elaraby.

Mr. Elaraby: I would like to thank you very much for Germany's excellent initiative in calling for this meeting.

At this meeting we heard very important statements by the 15 members of the Security Council. I hope that members will consider basic matiers, and not just the general statements that we can hear everywhere. It is important that we try to reach the core of the problems and to see how we can resolve them.

With regard to the Syrian Arab Republic, as many said today, the question is how to build upon what was agreed upon in Geneva on 30 June. At the start of the transitional period, the Security Council has to act and to act according to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. That has to be done. The five permanent members of the Council have agreed upon a text; let them build upon it.

With regard to Palestine, I would say only that managing the conflict is no longer a solution; one has to end the conflict. The Security Council gave up its responsibility with regard to Palestine to something called the Quartet. I did not mention it, but today many speakers pointed out that we said last year that something would happen this September. The month is about to end and nothing has happened. It is time that the Security Council takes the matter into its own hands, debate it and see what can be done.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.